

The Times-Dispatch

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FRIDAY, JULY 23, 1909.

TROUBLE AGAIN.

Four expected bidders out of five decline to compete for the contract for electrical equipment in the proposed municipal lighting plant. Each company bases its withdrawal from the competition upon the nature of the "revised specifications." The Allis-Chalmers Company declares that these specifications "entirely eliminate competition." The Adams-Bagnall Company complains that they call for certain proprietary articles patented and controlled by rival companies. The Crocker-Wheeler Company considers "the specifications as a whole discriminating in favor of one manufacturer." The Westinghouse Company affirms that they have "been modified so as to practically exclude them from the bidding." Here, in brief, are direct charges from 80 per cent. of the expected competitors that the terms of the contest have been made discriminatory, in favor of one or more concerns.

Such a coincidence is striking enough to arrest public attention. Only two explanations for it seem possible. One is that the specifications are, in fact, discriminatory as charged. The other is that they are not discriminatory, but that four companies out of five, knowing themselves beaten and desiring to gratify the spite of the vanquished, have conspired together to declare falsely that they are discriminatory. Which of these explanations, or what other one, is correct?

Technical problems require technical minds to analyze them. We can ask the question but cannot answer it. But let us at least make it as clear as possible that there is no intention here to rectify in the smallest way upon the integrity of Engineer Trafford or of the Council committee. If the specifications are discriminatory, it is possible that the most scrupulous care for the city's interests required them to be so. It is possible that the city's needs are so peculiar and particular that only one standard of apparatus, not of general manufacture, could fully satisfy them. Exact specifications were deemed desirable. The General Electric switchboard and feeder-regulator, adjudged by Mr. Trafford superior to all other makes, were frankly specified by name. It is possible that the same sort of exactness was advisable elsewhere. Mr. Trafford emphatically denies that the new specifications made it impossible for any company to bid. Whether it made it impossible for them to bid with any chance of profit is, of course, another matter. But if the implied charge of these companies is true, that is to say, if these specifications are arbitrarily and unfairly discriminatory, that charge is susceptible of proof by disinterested authority. Having been made, it should now be proved in this way or else withdrawn.

The electric plant project was born amid doubts and misgivings. Its later progress cannot be said to have cleared these uncertainties away. In fact, as we get deeper and deeper into it, a doubt increases as to whether the city should ever have undertaken this costly experiment in municipal ownership and operation at all. The other day, when all the old bids were thrown out and a brand-new start was made, the people hoped that snarls and tangles and charges and countercharges were a thing of the past. This hope has been sadly disappointed. It is said now that the committee will recommend the acceptance of the bid of the General Electric Company, the only bidder. If it does, we do not see how the Council can sustain its recommendation. The sole object of the call for new bids was to secure to the city the advantages of competition. That object, however fairly or however accidentally, has been defeated. One bidder obviously cannot compete with himself. As for the business opportunity to split the contract, choosing an item here and another there, according to price and quality, that also has fallen through for the same reason. It is impossible to choose among one bidder. If there are benefits to accrue from the bidding of one company against another, the city clearly should insist upon having these benefits. If, because of peculiar needs, there are no such benefits to accrue in this case, the form of a competition was never necessary. Award or awards by the city's expert could have settled the matter with much less trouble and delay.

COUNTY ENGINEERS FOR ROADS. One of the chief obstacles in the way of the good roads movement is pessimism born of unhappy experience. Too often in the past the farmers have seen their hard-earned money frittered away on amateur patchwork which has brought them only the smallest and most transient benefits; and many of them have consequently developed a certain skepticism which prompts them to hold on to their money and let the roads go. In a letter printed elsewhere this morning a civil engineer suggests a method by which the waste

and blunders of the past may be avoided. He proposes that each county retain a competent engineer whose trained knowledge shall be substituted for the honest but often ill-informed efforts of the commissioners, and who shall have full charge of the building and maintenance of the county roads. It is true that Virginia has a Highway Commission, whose powers and activities are State-wide, and that the Commission gladly furnishes engineering advice to the counties on application. But this is only in the case of permanent roads of high quality. Our correspondent's proposal covers both the construction of roads of a lower quality and the maintenance of all roads, in neither of which things can the Commission experts interest themselves. The idea seems sensible and practical, and there is no doubt that many counties could utilize it to decided advantage.

It is interesting to note that the question of county engineers has just come up in Georgia, where interest in road improvement is at a high pitch. Two prominent business men are quoted as severely condemning the present slipshod and unprofitable plan of road-building in Georgia, and earnestly urging the county road commissioners to engage the services of trained builders. The Atlanta Constitution warmly declares that no practical result can be expected "unless the respective counties, singly or jointly, employ competent road-building engineers." Macon county has already adopted the new plan, and has started out to spend all her road money for permanent improvements made under scientific direction. One Macon county farmer declares that an improved highway recently built has so enhanced the value of his land that he will voluntarily increase his tax returns \$2 an acre. Virginia has the advantage of Georgia in her State Highway Commission, but there still remain gaps in the scheme which the counties, if they expect the best results, must fill for themselves. Certain it is that road-building is a well-defined science, and men without technical training can no more engage in it successfully than they can engage in automobile-making or bridge-building or architecture.

THE COMING CONGRESSMAN.

Egged on by a visiting suffragette from Great Britain, Lady Somebody or other, the women of Denver announce their determination to send one of their own sex to represent them in Congress. Two little bridges are yet to be crossed by them. One is getting enough votes to elect their candidate. The other is persuading the House to seat her. The Constitution unfortunately indicates a Representative as a he, and that hypercritical body might insist that its own chivalrous desires in the premises were thereby rendered of no avail. We hope that everything proves smooth sailing, though, and that the lady comes in. A dash of the eternal feminine in the Congressional Record would help that enterprising publication not a little.

The candidate of the Denver lady politicians is a Mrs., and this is well. Married women are fine debaters, owing to much successful practice at home. Without notes or previous notice, they can speak at great length and with enormous effectiveness. No gentleman on the other side would ever convince them that their logic was wrong. They would know better, for the usual woman's reason. As filibusters, they would be superb, but they might grow restive under any strict enforcement of the five-minute rule. It has been said that no woman has ever understood the tariff, but Ida M. Tarbell has shattered this canard. Besides, if it were true, a woman Congressman would be at no serious disadvantage with a great many men Congressmen that we have heard of. Besides, again, she would be putting in all her time lobbying for votes for women and would take small interest in minor issues.

In the novels of Mrs. Humphrey Ward women often attain tremendous political power. Prime ministers turn pale when they draw near and mop their brows hysterically, fearing that the axe may be about to fall on their unworthy political necks. Something of this sort might easily be managed in this country. Congresswomen would have small hesitancy, we imagine, about calling up Mr. Taft on the telephone now and then, and speaking their minds. There is no telling what one of them might be accomplishing on the conference committee right now. But the most magnificent development of the possibilities of the situation would develop only when a Congresswoman became the floor leader of one party, while a Congressman, her husband, was the floor leader of the other. Then we should have a debate which would go rocking down the ages.

CLEVELAND'S "GOLDEN RULE" POLICE SYSTEM.

The police authorities of Cleveland seem well satisfied with the "golden rule" system of arrests. In a recent address to the Association of Police Chiefs, the Cleveland Chief, Fred Kohler, expressed his unqualified satisfaction with his unique system. He holds that admonition and warning on the part of the police, rather than constant arrests, will mark a revolution in the criminal annals of his city. While actual arrests have been reduced by 66 per cent., the general moral tone of the community is reported as much improved.

Like all other serious reforms, the "golden rule" plan has met with violent opposition in Cleveland. Some of the city's so far in denouncing the system as to declare that it practically legalizes misdeeds. The approval by a police justice of the officers' failure to arrest amounts, these critics say, to little more than a farce. Their chief objection to the plan, however,

is the large discretion placed in the hands of police officers.

It is on this last point that the value and ultimate success of such a plan as this must depend. If the police are negligent and half-hearted in their conduct, they will certainly encourage crime. If they are dishonest, they will have serious temptations to palliate and conceal serious offenses, under the cloak of the law. But more important still is the question whether the policeman is able to distinguish between the casual offender and the hardened criminal. As every patrolman becomes a probation officer by this system, he must have the ability to distinguish between these classes, and to judge the character of the man he examines. If Cleveland can secure policemen who can meet this test upon their discretion, their honesty and their ability, the golden rule plan will stand approved.

But whatever may be the practical difficulties involved, the theory of this system is wholly laudable. It is in accord with the doctrines which penologists have been advocating for years; it is a decided step towards prevention of crime, and it is a healthy reaction from the old punitive doctrine of an eye for an eye. The stigma of the police court or the jail, no matter how petty an offense, is a lasting disgrace to the first offender. As Judge Mack puts it: "Why must we take first offenders away from their families and lock them up in a cell and degrade them in their own sight and in the sight of their fellow-men, without any consideration for the influence of their environment, for the conditions that caused the crime?" Just in proportion as these men are warned against evil and successfully encouraged to lead honest lives the moral life of the community is improved and the number of future criminals is reduced.

With all those bonds to plunge on, the Panama Canal ought to be able to come out with golden locks.

Mr. Taft's bill of fare agreed finely with the conferees, but the tariff bill still causes indignation.

Our corps of research workers is now collecting statistics to prove that the hammocks of Old Virginia lead to far fewer broken arms than those of other States.

The Baltimore Sun has a leading article on "Natural Gas and Governor Crook." Not knocking the Governor at all.

Mobile has a new curfew law requiring colored men to go home at 10 o'clock every night. Colored men who have no homes are thus put in rather an awkward little situation.

President Taft has had the pleasure of seeing himself as others see him in the moving picture shows. Incidentally, we might remark that a good film showing the President vetoing any tariff bill that was satisfactory to Aldrich and those fellows would make a tremendous hit with the populace.

The worm will turn. A former pedestrian has got an automobile and run down Barney Oldfield.

If Denver sends a woman to Congress we suppose it will become necessary to give her an extra session.

We have no doubt that the Bolivians, in their fevered dreams, are now seeing a million Argentine airplanes of the dreadnought type every night.

Shall we yet see the Gentleman from Indiana give way to the Fair Lady from Colorado?

Our own view is that M. Latham, being a neighbor of the Channel's, and passing by, simply thought that he'd drop in.

Through circumstances and the lapse of time, it has become all but impossible to think of him as Henry Taft.

Yet if Jean or Gregoire succeeds in fitting across the English Channel in an airship, why not Carl or Frederick?

If the Democrats and Republicans decide to play another head-on game, we shall make a strong bid to have them play in Richmond and designate Mr. Aldrich to umpire.

Galveston's life was saved by a wall. Everything is playing into the hands of the high-tariff people these days.

GOOD ROADS FOR CAROLINA.

Highway Movement Finds Strong Adversary in the State.

The Tradesman is taking up active interest in the cause of good roads. It quotes President Frank C. Battery, of the Savannah Automobile Club as saying:

"We are very anxious to secure better facilities in reaching Columbia and Charleston. . . . If it can be shown that not only Beaufort and the other counties between here and Charleston, but the counties between here and Columbia are anxious to have a connection and will get right to work at it, I have no doubt that the authorities here will do their part in the near future and make this connection complete, so that tourists can travel all the way from the North via Charleston and Columbia and pass through Savannah in the direction of Florida."

We are glad to say that the national agitation for good roads has been directed principally of late to the construction of a highway from New York to Florida. It is the hope of the motor enthusiasts that this road will pass through Charleston. It is time that the people of this city join in the movement. Savannah is extending her hand and her invitation should be accepted.

We pointed out recently that a modern highway along the coast would be of almost as much advantage to the city as a new railway. There is no land in the world more suited to the production of early truck than the coast land, and the greatest difficulty in its development has been the lack of good transportation facilities. It is said that the Yonge's Island Division of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway is the best paying railway property in the United States. A few years ago that region was a waste. There are other sections that are waste now simply because the cost of transportation is prohibitive.

We also pointed out that coast planters could avoid themselves of water rates North if they had a good highway to this city. The richest land is worthless if transportation rates are not low, or if there is no means of transportation whatever. Modern highways are good things for automobilists, but they are not good things for farmers, for the building up of a farming country adjacent to a city they are a prime necessity. The time to act is now. —Charleston News and Courier.

Borrowed Jingles.

THE RIVALS.

An airship soared in the upper sky. An eagle watched it with careful eye. "A beautiful bird," he cried, "well see if it is going to fight like me."

A dove sat watching it skim the blue. As over the farms and homes it flew. "A beautiful bird," she cried, "I will be if it is a symbol of peace like me."

An owl perched it at all of night. As over the trees it took its flight. "Quitter and weak," he said, "well try it as we will a bird as I."

A hen looked up with a jealous glance. To see it rise in the clear expanse. "Although it can fly," she said, "I beg to state the critic can't sing."

—Washington Post.

MERELY JOKING.

The Difference of Sex.

Henry VIII. was musing philosophically in the royal study.

"The just pretend to be the best of the marrying habit, but it certainly does make a woman lose her head,"—Baltimore American.

His Opinion.

"Isn't there a great deal of water in the case?" asked the prospective tenant.

"Yes," answered the agent, proudly. "We really ought to call it a bathtub and charge extra rent for it."—Harper's Bazar.

The Entire Trouble.

"Don't take it so hard," said the sympathetic friend. "Remember that though your daughter is married you have not lost her."

"I know it," sobbed the bride's mother. "The dear child, Julia, and her husband have already picked out the best room in the house for their,"—Chicago Record-Herald.

On Furlough.

"Well, I belong to the army of de unemployed."

"Want a week's work?"

"No, I couldn't desert from de army."

"The just pretend to be the best of the marrying habit, but it certainly does make a woman lose her head,"—Baltimore American.

Heard in the Office.

"He's a regular contributor to your paper, isn't he?" asked the caller.

"Oh, yes," replied the city editor, "but we haven't used any of his for years."

"But I thought you said he was a regular contributor?"

"He contributes just the same,"—Yonkers Statesman.

Special Employment.

"Hullo, mate, 'ow is it you ain't workin'?"

"Well, it's like this: I works at a domino factory, and I duble on the spots, and they're giving me double blanks to-day!"—London Opinion.

THE OBSERVANT PARAGRAPHERS.

A SWIMMING expert explains that the crawl stroke is most troublesome to amateurs. It's a good deal of an embarrassment, too, in the case of an inlander.

The thermometer is 10 in the shade down in Texas, and Senator Bailey has not yet returned home.—Omaha Bee.

The British suffragette who went 151 hours without food has demonstrated her absolute fitness for duty, and has been released from her hunger strike.—New York Evening Post.

It appears that Kermis has been daring almost to the point of recklessness while hunting in Africa. It is strange that the oldest son of Prince Leopold of Bavaria, second son of the Regent, and his mother is Archduchess Gisela, the daughter of the late ex-Grand Duke Ferdinand IV. of Tuscany. She is the only daughter of the Emperor of Austria. The latter is very fond of Prince George, and always has him with him on his shooting expeditions, especially when he is in the Tyrol.

Copenhagen's city fathers have just given evidence of a degree of democracy in the election of a new town hall. The city fathers have elected a new town hall. The city fathers have elected a new town hall.

The memorial seems to have been completed without its design, being submitted to the City Council. But it is not in the hands of the city fathers. The memorial seems to have been completed without its design, being submitted to the City Council. But it is not in the hands of the city fathers.

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The Courts of Europe

By La Marquise de Fontenoy.

Lord Kitchener Not Wanted in Canada.

W HILE the Australians are urging General Lord Kitchener to visit Australia, the British military authorities in Canada are not so sure.

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